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*The Presence of CHRIST with his CHURCH in every
Age and Period of it, explained and improved.*

A
DISCOURSE
DELIVERED AT
ANTRIM, JUNE 28, 1774.
AT A
GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE
Protestant Dissenting Ministers
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN PERSUASION
IN U L S T E R.

By WILLIAM CAMPBELL, ^K of *Armagh.*

OUR FAITH SHOULD NOT STAND IN THE WISDOM OF MEN, BUT IN
THE POWER OF GOD. 1 COR. ii. 5.

Second Edition.

B E L F A S T:

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MDCCLXXIV.

*The Monthly Review for Sept: 1775
speaks of this Synodical Sermon as follows :*

*"A sensible and plain Discourse; in which
the pious and the rational are agreeably united.
It traces briefly the Christian Religion from its
early dawn to the present period, and looks
forward to its more glorious Triumph.*

*In all, it shews the care of Providence
over the Christian Church, and fulfilment of the
promise of Christ, Matt: 28. 20. which is
the foundation of the Sermon. It pleads
very forcibly for Religious Liberty, & mutual
forbearance among Christians: And sets
before us some plain Truths, which highly
deserve to be carefully attended to."*



The Presence of CHRIST with his
CHURCH in every Age and Period
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MATTHEW xxviii. 20.

— *And lo, I am with you always, even
unto the end of the World.*

WHEN our Lord Jesus appeared as the
promised Messiah, he assumed a very
exalted *character*, and spoke of a pe-
culiar dignity and glory, which he enjoyed
with the Father, before the world was, and
which he was again to enjoy, after his ascen-
sion to the right hand of God-----In confir-
mation of this high claim, and in evidence of
his mission from heaven, he appealed to the an-
tient prophecies, and to the miracles which he
himself wrought by a divine power.

WHEN therefore he had fulfilled his ministry,
and established the principles and scheme of his
religion, he, according to the counsel of God,
delivered himself up to death, that he might en-
ter on the administration of his mediatorial king-
dom. For it is every where laid down as a
part of the scheme of providence, that Christ
was to suffer, before he entered into his glory,
and that, in consequence of his sufferings, he
was *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.*

Luke xxiv. Act. v. 31.

As the prospect of his sufferings and death, and of his departure out of the world, had filled the disciples with the deepest distress, he endeavoured to support and strengthen their minds with every consolation, that was fitted to alleviate that distress, and to supply them with fortitude, and steadiness, and elevation of mind, sufficient to carry them through the difficult service to which they were called. And none of the least of these considerations, was the promise of his continued protection, and his immediate presence with them at all times, and with those that, by their ministry, should believe in his name, *even unto the end of the world.*

THIS is a subject, in which all the members of the Church of Christ are peculiarly and intimately concerned : it has a natural tendency to open and enlarge the mind with the most honourable views of christianity ; to give us the most noble and exalted idea of the mediatorial kingdom of the Lord Jesus ; to shew us our interest in the favour and protection of heaven, and thereby to fill the heart with joy and consolation.

I MUST therefore bespeak your indulgence, whilst I endeavour to shew in the best manner I *can*, what we are to understand by *this presence of Christ* with his church ; what is the nature and extent of it with regard to his immediate disciples, and also with regard to his followers in after ages ; and make such reflections as the subject will suggest to us, suitable to the design of our present meeting.

1. IN the *first place*, then, the effects of this promise,

promise, with regard to the Apostles, were striking and illustrious, and deserving of our particular attention. But to enter into this part of the subject, let it be observed, that no one can well suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts, more unlikely to sustain itself, than the christian religion was, at the period we are now considering.

THE office, to which the Apostles were appointed, was singular and uncommon : the undertaking was great and noble, indeed ; but it was arduous, of difficult enterprise, and full of danger. These men would seem to be of a character by no means the fittest to engage in such a design. They do not appear to have had any degree of fortitude and magnanimity, superior to other men : they do not appear to have had a degree of fortitude and magnanimity, equal to many other men : on the contrary, it would seem, they were the reverse of enterprising ; they were timid, they were irresolute, they were pusillanimous.

THEIR divine Master had supported them by his power, while present with them ; he had endeavoured to fortify them against his departure, by discourses full of a composed dignity and greatness, but at the same time full of friendship, full of humanity, and breathing the most affectionate concern for their future happiness and welfare, and particularly for their success in the grand design of propagating his religion, and reforming the world. To this purpose he promises them every necessary support ; assures them

them of the protection of the Father ; of the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, and declares that it is expedient even *for them, that he should go away : For if I do not go away, saith he, the Comforter will not come; but if I go, I will send him.* And the immediate consequence of his coming was to be the enlightening of their minds with the knowledge of divine truth, and enduing them with the spirit of prophecy. John xvi. 7---13.

BUT it would seem they understood none of these things. However great and noble these promises were ; how proper soever to inspire fortitude and resolution ; yet they had little effect to remove their fears, much less to establish their minds. For on the first appearance of danger, though not to themselves, but to their Lord, they were struck with an unmanly terror ; they all forsook him and fled.

THEIR thoughts appear to have been turned quite another way ; they were big with expectations of worldly grandeur and glory. Christ they considered as their Prince, who was to be a mighty conqueror, who was to restore the kingdom to Israel, to subdue their enemies and to extend his dominion wide over the nations of the earth. They flattered themselves, that they should partake of this glory, and were already aspiring at the places of highest pre-eminence and dignity in his kingdom. To men filled with such pleasing dreams of worldly greatness and splendor, only imagine what it must have been to fall from their hopes all at once,
and

and to see their flattering prospect come to nothing in a moment; nay more, to see their Master, in whom they so much confided, whom they considered as their deliverer and triumphant king, to see *him* hurried away from them, treated with a studied indignity and scorn, and adjudged to an ignominious death!

HERE was a situation peculiarly distressing. How full of disappointment and perplexity, and if we rest our views here, how void of all comfort and hope!

IN this state of dejection, and despondency they continued even after the resurrection of Jesus: this amazing exertion of divine power had not been able to remove it. Therefore our Lord again repeats before his *ascension*, the assurances of a divine protection: And to convince them of the peculiar interest they had in the administration of providence, he tells them, that he, their Lord, was to be their guardian and protector; that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth; that in a short time, they should have the most satisfying evidence of his being exalted to this state of dignity and glory, and that he would ever be present with them by his divine power. He commands them to go forth in the strength of this power, to instruct the nations of the world in the knowledge of the true God, and of his Christ. They did go forth in the strength of this power, no longer timid, and irresolute; but bold, determined, adventurous, and undismayed by the various dangers they every where encountered.

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A COMPANY of plain and illiterate men, went forth on this great design, weak and unarmed, unassisted by any worldly interest, having no secular power to give them countenance or authority. This was the case not of the Apostles only : for the preachers of christianity laboured under these disadvantages for several ages. Notwithstanding such disadvantages, these men so seemingly weak and contemptible did by the power of God, gain numbers every day to their religion, and in a short time drew the world after them.

LET us then no longer wonder at this amazing success : let us not wonder, that the Apostles of Christ rose superior to every difficulty ; that they triumphed over every opposition, whether from the power and influence of government, from the wit and learning of the philosophers, or from, what was still more to be dreaded, the zeal and bigotry of the established superstitions. For Christ did by his presence, by demonstration of the spirit and of power, and by many illustrious miracles wrought in his name and by his authority, lay the foundations of a church, that was to endure throughout all ages.

WHAT other account can be given of this amazing success but that it was of God, and therefore could not be overthrown ; “ that God had chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty, that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” 1 Cor. i. 2.

WHAT is much to my purpose to observe, is,
that

that men were not only brought to the profession of the gospel, but this doctrine had a suitable efficacy on their lives and manners: Upon the change of their religion followed also a change of character. They, that took upon them the profession of the cross, *did not walk as the Gentiles in the vanity of their minds, but were obedient in word and deed, and were renewed in righteousness after the image of God.* This also was the promise of Christ to his church; *if any man will keep my words, my Father will love him; and we will come, and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23.

AFTER the Apostolick age, the miraculous interposition ceased. The church of Christ was no longer to be governed by any visible interposition of heaven, nor by any visible representative on earth: Nor was it to be governed by any authority vested in men to make new laws or to alter those laid down by Christ and his Apostles.

FOR, II. Having established his religion by a train of illustrious miracles, his care and attention in the preservation of it, was no less conspicuous, according to his promise.

I. HERE we may observe as the first and principal care for preserving christianity in its native purity, that its divine author had his doctrines committed to writing by his Apostles under the immediate guidance of the spirit of truth, and that he hath preserved these sacred records, as the rule and standard of the christian faith for ever. For without the scriptures of truth, how

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quickly

quickly would the knowledge of christianity have been lost : or at least, its doctrines corrupted by the uncertainty of a vain tradition.

2. ALONG with this, there were also appointed pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; not to be lords over the consciences of their brethren, but to be helpers of their joy. And,

3. The great bond that was to unite the universal family of Christ was to be the law of kindness, and love, and mutual forbearance. This was to be their distinguishing principle. They were to be joined together in affection and harmony of mind, in the unity of the spirit and bond of peace.

UPON this footing was christianity *now* left to make its way by its own native excellence. It was to prevail and flourish by the power of its intrinsic evidence and worth, and by its interest in the protection of the great Sovereign of the Universe.

FOR though the miraculous powers were no longer continued in the church, yet the subjects of it enjoyed singular advantages, whereby they were fully convinced of its divine original. They had before them the effects of the extraordinary interposition of heaven in the success of the gospel in the immediately preceding age ; the testimony of numberless profelytes given to a religion founded on the authority of the Apostles and Prophets, and built on the ruins of all the religious professions that had ever been established

lished in the world; the fortitude of its professors in suffering death for the truth of this testimony, expressing their faith in the miraculous interposition of heaven, as the foundation on which this religion was built and gained credit among men.

To support and animate them still more, they had not only the promises of the gospel, the assistance of the holy spirit of God, but they were instructed in the nature of providence. The mediatorial kingdom of Christ was as it were, disclosed, and so much of it laid open to their view, as must have filled their hearts with the warmest and most affectionate gratitude. They were taught to entertain very enlarged and exalted notions of the government of God; that Christ was gone into heaven and seated on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him; that because of his obedience unto death, God had highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that all power in heaven and in earth was committed to him for the protection and safety of his church; that this power should continue until all his enemies be put under his feet, and that, invested as he was with this greatness of power, he will be present with his followers in a certain peculiar and intimate manner at all times.

To raise our minds to still more exalted conceptions of those scenes of providence in which we are so deeply interested, the Angels of God, those blessed spirits that always surround his throne,

throne, are represented as ministring spirits sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation: They are represented as employed by the Lord Jesus for the protection of his followers, and their zeal in executing their office is strongly expressed by saying "there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Here is a view of the administration of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ worthy of the divine author of it, worthy of the majesty of heaven, and fitted to inspire the mind with the noblest sentiments of God and his providence.

THESE sublime truths of religion, and these exceedingly great and precious promises, were the perpetual and standing *guards* of the church of Christ. They are singular and extraordinary; not designed however as miracles to work by a sort of overbearing influence, exceedingly useful at the beginning indeed, but not necessary to be always continued, as miracles are not a sign to those that believe, but to those that believe not. But those illustrious promises, co-operating with the evidences of a divine power, were intended to work on the mind by way of rational conviction and moral influence; that as faith is every where in the new Testament mentioned with praise, so in every succeeding age the inquirers into the foundations of our religion, might have room left for the exercise of their virtue, their love of truth and simplicity of heart, and an opportunity of shewing a becoming attention to the great concernments of religion and righteousness, that our religion might be the fruit

fruit of our own industry and personal persuasion, in consequence of the evidence of its divine truth.

I AM well aware that in treating the subject of Christ's government of his church, it may be expected that some notice should be taken of a certain Order of men, who have set themselves forward as the governors of it, and arrogate a very high authority, as if they were invested with a delegated power to make new laws according to circumstances and exigencies, with regard to which Christ and his Apostles are entirely silent, and that in this view, they are somehow successors of the Apostles; that when *they* think proper to meet in their councils and synods, the spirit of truth shall guide them into all truth, that thus by their weak and vain decisions the purity of our divine religion is to be guarded. Thus after all, our faith must stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God!

BUT as I can find no sort of foundation for any such power in the new Testament, but quite the contrary; so we shall also find in fact, that from the time this order began to claim such power, no set of men required more to be themselves governed than those who assumed the title of governors of others, and that none have corrupted christianity more than they have done.

MINISTERS of the christian church have indeed a certain office assigned them, and a very sacred and important one; that of teaching and instructing the flocks committed to their care, enough to employ all their skill and diligence, without

out lording it over God's heritage: "for however the Lords of the Gentiles may exercise dominion, yet it shall not be so among the followers of Christ; in this view they are all brethren."

THE presence of Christ therefore is rather to be expected by particular persons, and the spirit of God supposed to dwell with them, in a more private and hidden manner. The kingdom of Christ cometh not with observation, is not attended with shew and splendor and outward authority, *but it is within you*; it reigns in the hearts of his servants enlightening their understandings, in their researches after the great truths of God and of religion, and forming their minds to the love of purity and righteousness. For with those who are purified from the tyranny of evil passion, who have the love of God and charity ruling in their breast; and who are enriched with the graces of the christian character; with those, we can only suppose, that Christ will dwell.

BUT when we consider the excellence of the christian institution, the peculiar attention of providence to the establishment of christianity, in the testimony of prophecy, in the many and illustrious miracles wrought in confirmation of it, and the continued protection of Heaven in its support; how shall we account for it, that the effects produced in the world, seem not at all answerable to the expence of so much goodness and power, as the divine Being, with a liberal and bountiful hand, hath employed for the reformation and instruction of mankind?

THIS

THIS is a subject of much importance in our present inquiry, and if we can give any satisfactory account of it, may afford matter of useful reflection.

HERE let it be acknowledged, that according to our views of things, it would seem that the effects produced are not answerable to that measure of goodness and wisdom, used by providence for the reformation and happiness of mankind. Though at the same time it must be also acknowledged, that in accounting for the ways of providence, our judgments must be attended with much uncertainty, and therefore should be pronounced with great modesty and diffidence.

FOR notwithstanding the very general defection there may have been in the church, yet it is still true, that with regard to many of the followers of Christ, his Religion hath produced the happiest effects, by forming in them the very best characters of modesty, humility, meekness, contentment, and the love of God and of mankind; though these effects on pious men, however considerable in themselves, might be little observed by the world. Those virtues, that are the greatest ornaments, and constitute the dignity of the christian character, flourish most in retirement and in the sequestered vale of life: Scenes, which the historian is apt to pass over, or seldom offers to view, or else presents them in a false light. The presence of Christ is most discernible in the silent workings of divine truth on the heart, which adorn the character

rafter with decency and worth, but have nothing to do with what is sometimes called the splendor of religion, with pageantry and shew, or with the ostentation of a vain philosophy.

BUT even with regard to the outward good effects of christianity on the world, not to mention, what has been often taken notice of, how much it tended to improve the manners and customs of men, and to introduce a higher degree of humanity and refinement; it may be observed, that the presence of Christ with his Church was *conspicuous* for several ages after its first establishment. For christianity, notwithstanding the defection of some members of the Church, maintained its reputation during that period, and with much purity, in direct opposition to the civil power, in contradiction to opinions generally received, in defiance of the reigning superstition, and the zeal of all the religious professions then established in the world; and that, not in a dark age, not amongst an ignorant people, but in the most enlightened ages, and amidst the most learned and polished nations of the earth. This was effected by the invincible fortitude and integrity of the followers of Jesus, who amidst persecution and every suffering, maintained their allegiance to Christ, in an humble dependence on divine providence, and animated by the truths of the Gospel.

BUT whatever account may be given of the degeneracy of the Christian Church, it can be no objection against the mediatorial government of Christ, against his interposition to maintain the

the purity of the Christian Faith, his earnest concern for the prosperity of his Church, or the most affectionate desire of its happiness. Because this apostacy was foreseen, and foretold by Christ himself, and by his Apostles, and also by some of the antient prophets; and the cause clearly pointed out as proceeding from the corruption of the hearts of men, they having loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. The end was the trial of their faith and patience, *that they that are approved may be made manifest: For many shall be purified, and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.* How is Christ represented as mourning over the infidelity of those that heard him, and expressing the deepest concern for their hardness of heart? And the prophets in the Old Testament introduce the supreme Being lamenting over his people and condescending in the kindest manner to expostulate with them for their incorrigible folly and degeneracy.

THOUGH the christian institution exhibits a system of religion both sublime and rational, and fitted to produce the happiest effects on mankind; yet to produce these effects, the seeds of truth must be sown in a proper soil, must meet with suitable dispositions of mind, and be received in the love of it; otherwise it will be perverted and abused to every evil purpose. Indeed it is exceedingly strange to consider how soon men fell off from the truth and simplicity of the

Gospel, and how soon an immoderate zeal for external rites and speculative opinions became the ruling passion of the church. The beginnings of this corruption appeared very early : something of it was seen even in the days of the Apostles ; men aiming at pre-eminence and power, setting themselves at the head of sects and parties, and their followers with still greater and more unmeaning folly ranging themselves under their several Leaders and contending with zeal and animosity: *I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas !*

THIS claim was not set up by the Apostles, but by factious men in opposition to their authority ; as in later ages we have seen the like opposition to the Scriptures. But though the Apostles were inspired and held the most distinguished rank in the Church of Christ, and if any could, they certainly might have asserted an authority over their christian brethren ; yet they not only disclaimed this authority themselves, but every where spoke against it with indignation, and represented it as the beginning of that *antichristian power*, which was to distract the Church and by a spiritual tyranny erect its throne on the ruins of christianity.

THUS the first corruptions in the christian church proceeded from the love of power and dominion and a publick leading : and this same spirit of domination hath continued through every age of the church, and hath been a fertile source of vanity and spiritual pride, of strife and variance and the bitterest contention.

III. THIS

III. THIS antichristian power, the empire of the Man of Sin so particularly described in the New Testament, was not only founded on this spiritual tyranny, but chiefly by the same means was raised to its height, supporting itself by I know not what claims of *uninterrupted succession, Orders, and indelible Character*; Claims which have been most ungracefully adopted by certain Protestant Churches, though they are words without meaning and understood by no body.*

Is it to be wondered, that with such men, full of a vain, imaginary importance, Religion should dwindle into an empty form; that they should defend it, such as it is, by policy, by craft, by pious frauds, and what is the greatest disgrace not only of Religion, but of humanity, that they should defend it by penal laws and by persecution, whilst in the mean time the divine form of christianity was entirely lost and forgotten?

WERE we to assign no other causes of the corruption of christianity, this alone would be enough to account for it; but along with this several other causes concurred, which we shall just mention, as it would be too tedious to pursue them as their importance deserves.

I. SUCH was the introducing of the doctrines of philosophy into the christian system, particularly the philosophy of the *later Platonists*; by which the purity and simplicity of the truths of the Gospel were gradually obscured, whilst men endeavoured to accommodate the doctrine of

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Christ

* See Father Paul's history of the Council of Trent.

Christ to the systems they had learned in the schools of the philosophers, before they were converted to the christian faith.*

2. THE mixture of civil authority with Religion, when the Roman Emperor became christian; whereby christianity became a sort of state policy and a branch of civil government, and a foundation was laid for the temporal greatness and power and riches of the clergy, who from this period seem to have forgotten they were ministers of the Gospel and to have considered themselves rather as officers of the state, subservient to the views of Government, and that places in the church were the road to wealth and civil preferment, and the sure means of gratifying their ambition, their avarice, or luxury-----We need not wonder then that from the first establishment of christianity by civil government, it was no longer able to preserve its purity.

3. IN process of time, the admission of great part of the *heathenish Ritual* into the established or political christianity, for the purposes of superstition and by way of ornament, or as we speak in our day, for decency and order,

THESE things I can only mention; they will afford matter of curious reflection to the learned and inquisitive.

UPON these principles the corruption of christianity advanced to a formidable height and

* De veris philosophis dicit Tertullianus, philosophos esse patriarchas hæreticorum, qui ecclesiæ puritatem doctrina sua commacularunt. Examen Decret. Con. Trid. p. 255.

extended its influence wide over the western world. Even in the uncertain state of the Roman empire and during the irruptions of the barbarous nations, circumstances that seemed to threaten equally the destruction of the church and of the empire, the church continued to advance in temporal greatness and power. Amidst all those convulsions that overturned this mighty empire, an interested and subtle clergy abounded in expedients for aggrandizing the church; and not contented with assuming a dominion in the ecclesiastical system, they dictated under the mask of Religion in secular concerns, to kings and nations, exalting their power to the summit of antichristian tyranny, *above every thing that is called God.*

LET us pause here a little and reflect on this amazing corruption of the religion of Christ--- We see a religion full of purity and simplicity, full of kindness and good-will, full of a peculiar exalted charity which is made its distinguishing character; we see a religion, the great end of which is to raise mankind to the highest perfection in moral excellence, that they may be fitted for the society of their kindred spirits in the heavenly world, those Angels that do continually behold the face of God; We see this divine religion turned into an engine of state, prostituted to the purposes of ambition, of tyranny, of avarice, perverted to the lowest superstition, and instead of exalting human nature, rendered the instrument of the utmost depravity both of heart and understanding, instead
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of filling the breast with kindness and love, distracting it with blind and furious zeal, full of ill-will, of rage, of malice, and of every hateful passion-----So that human nature perhaps appears in no point of view to greater disadvantage and in a more unfavourable light, than in the depravity and corruption of the most amiable and excellent institution, that mankind had ever been blessed with.

It would seem that to bring mankind to a state of perfection, particularly of religious perfection, is not only a work of much difficulty, but if at all to be accomplished, requires also much time and patience and the most favourable opportunities of culture and improvement.

PHILOSOPHY, with all its boasted excellence, made a very small progress among men. It would seem a difficult thing to bring mankind from a state of infancy. They are immersed in material things. They are impatient of thought, averse to application, and it is long before they begin to reason and get beyond that state of imbecillity, or sort of infancy, which we account rude and barbarous. It is long before their manners are civilized: it is still longer before their minds are enlightened with knowledge and with science.

THEIR improvement depends upon a variety of concurring circumstances of long continuance, working steadily and uniformly, and they are ready to fall back into their former state of indolence, when this progress is stopped by any unfortunate event.

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THE best improvement of the human mind spreads slowly through the various nations of the earth, and a long period is requisite to prepare men for those higher advancements in moral and religious knowledge, which according to our notions, would seem natural and easy.

THE Jewish institution may be considered in this view as of the highest utility, as a light shining in a dark place, whose influence might imperceptibly extend through the neighbouring nations, in the way of tradition and mystic story*, helping to fix the attention, gradually opening the mind, and accustoming men to THINK. This, no doubt, is the most difficult step of all; for as soon as men have acquired this patience of thought, they soon unfold the hidden powers of the mind, turn their attention to subjects exalted and sublime, and at length to enlarged views of God and of his providence.

THE discovery of that which we call the law of nature, including in it a system of duties to God and to society, which now appears so exceedingly easy, must in the early periods of the world have been a prodigious effort of the human mind. The early sages of antiquity gradually prepared the way, aiming at nothing more than some general maxims of prudence, uttered in detached sentences. But it was not till after a succession of ages that any thing was produced suitable to that dignity, which to us seems congenial to the human mind.

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* Platon. Dial. passim.

AT length some men appeared of exalted genius, who by a peculiar sublimity of thought and greatness of imagination, were able to charm their followers into the love of philosophy, whose writings have been the delight and admiration of the learned in every succeeding age.

BUT still these refinements in knowledge and science were long confined to a small part of the world, and very few in those parts understood them. And from the difficulty of raising their minds to abstract and spiritual ideas, from their inattention and proneness to superstition, those vast improvements did not work out their full effects. Men either did not discern their importance, or were ready to fall back again and sink down into their former ignorance.

HENCE arises another observation:-----God in his various dispensations to mankind seems, in the kindest condescension, to stoop to their weakness, to lead them by the hand, as it were, up to manhood. The views of religion in the Old Testament open to the patriarchs very gradually. The institution of Moses appears altogether as refined, as the minds of the Israelites could bear. Their forty years journeying through the wilderness may be considered as a school of discipline under the immediate protection, and we may say, in the immediate presence of JEHOVAH: indeed it was no more than necessary, nay scarcely sufficient, to wear out the impressions of Egyptian idolatry and superstition, and to implant in the minds of the rising generation some more worthy and honourable notions

notions of the divine nature, of his government of the world, and of a worship in some measure more pleasing and acceptable to God.

PHILOSOPHY may be mentioned as the next best gift of providence to mankind. Philosophy may be considered as the hand-maid of Revelation: for as far as its influence spread through the world, it rendered men attentive to science and to the acquisition of wisdom, and by the nobleness of its speculations, opened and enlarged the mind; and however confined we may suppose its effects to have been, it was one principal means, co-operating with other circumstances, for bringing on the fulness of time, which prepared the world for the revelation of Jesus.

THIS slow and gradual advancement of moral and religious knowledge; this extreme difficulty of rising from material to spiritual things, though it may not at all be conformable to our speculative notions of the dignity of human nature, yet is exceedingly so to the history of mankind*.

So that whatever force there may be in the objection taken from the abuse and corruptions of christianity, it would seem to hold with equal weight, if not with greater, against the abuse of the light of nature.

I WOULD not be understood to represent human nature as mean, or low, or contemptible.

* *Lettres Curieuses & Edifiantes. Voyage de Mr. de la Condamine, Ulloa, &c.*

Exceedingly different is my opinion of this most finished of the works of God that come under our view. The human soul being created in the image of God, the seeds of greatness and of every virtue must be implanted in it: but from this view of the actual state of the world, I would observe that how honourable and distinguished soever the rank of mankind may be in the scale of Being, yet they are placed in such circumstances as require constant culture and discipline, and that without the most careful and diligent attention to unfold, to cherish, and improve those latent, congenial principles of the Soul, they cannot be advanced to that perfection, which the God of nature designed them for, and which is the ultimate end of all his works and ways.

Now though christianity was, in a particular manner intended and fitted for this noblest purpose, yet from the causes already assigned it sunk into the deepest degeneracy and corruption both in doctrine and worship.

HOWEVER, then, the genius of christianity might have tended to soften and improve the manners and customs of men, and to introduce a higher degree of humanity and refinement, yet the greatest part of the christian world, and especially those who assumed an usurped authority, and power and dignity in the church, were sunk into the grossest superstition, nay into a total ignorance of every thing that deserves the name of Religion.

So

So that in this apostacy of the christian church should we descend to a particular view of the various national Establishments, the conduct of Councils both general and particular, the Synods and Convocations of Ecclesiastics, and consider their contentions and strife, and unhallowed divisions, and along with these should we take in the tyranny and usurpation of Rome, the blind submission of princes, and of every rank and order of men to this ecclesiastical power; and the superstition, and bigotry, and profound darkness which overspread the face of the christian world; it would seem that nothing less than the protection of Heaven could have preserved christianity from being utterly lost. Nothing but the immediate presence of Christ could have preserved in their integrity those few of his followers, who had the resolution to maintain the truth.

THE history of the church gives us abundant evidence, that in every age there was such a providential care and protection employed about it as Christ himself hath signified by his promise, *that the gates of Hell should not prevail against it.* For as in the grossest idolatry of the Jews there were still found some, who maintained their allegiance to the true God, and did not bow the knee to Baal; in like manner Christ did not leave himself without witnesses, that the purity of the christian doctrine might be preserved, however discountenanced by the enemies of christianity or by the unfriendly professors of it.

I SAY the unfriendly professors of christianity ; for these have ever been the greatest corrupters of it. And no doubt it must help greatly to establish the mind in a steady reliance on providence and the interposition of Heaven for the security of the gospel, that in the times of deepest ignorance and corruption, some men of the best characters for purity of manners and for such erudition as then prevailed, appeared in the church, in France and Italy, in England and Germany, and in this kingdom, who bore a glorious testimony against the usurpation and degeneracy of Rome. By this means the knowledge of christianity was in some sort kept alive, and the foundation laid for rescuing the Religion of Christ from darkness and restoring it to its native beauty, and plainness, and simplicity.

IV. AT length by the divine blessing the glorious period came. The light arose and dispelled the darkness and ignorance, that had so long benighted the christian world. . And perhaps there is no period, at which such a variety of causes concurred to enlighten the human mind and to extend the influence of reason, by which mankind discovered a thousand errors in religion, and were taught that no precedent or authority could sanctify impiety or spiritual tyranny and usurpation. And here, if any where, we may discover the presence of Christ and the interposition of providence in favour of his church ; not indeed by any over-bearing power inconsistent with the nature of religion and virtue, but by presenting christianity in such a view, and
affording

affording such means of information, as might engage the attention and the love of the sincere and ingenuous.

BUT as religion at the Reformation rose from an abyss of darkness, of ignorance and superstition, so in many places it arose with FADED BEAUTY, as might well be expected after so many ages of degeneracy. For emerging out of darkness, is it to be wondered that many of those illustrious men, who set themselves at the head of the Reformation, had confused views of religion and could not at once lay aside all their prejudices, so as to distinguish the truths of the Gospel, pure and unmixed, amidst all that load of error, wherein it had lain so long confused? This I mention not in their dispraise, as the things they performed were astonishing for the age and circumstances in which they lived, but to abate an undue, a blind submission to the authority of their venerable names.

UNHAPPILY for the purity of religion, those few that could discern it and were smitten with the love of its unaffected simplicity had not power and influence to carry on a farther reformation, and those that had, either used it as an engine of state, or retained such fondness for the old superstition, as made them continue to deck christianity with foreign ornament; which in some protestant Establishments has thrown so thick a veil over it even to this day, that its genuine features are little discernible.

I WONDER

I WONDER not so much at the vast efforts and manly struggles for christian liberty, for purity of faith and worship, which were made by the first Reformers, as I do at the little progress that has been made by their sons in the long period, that has succeeded that remarkable æra.

IT is to be observed, that in every nation of Europe, which embraced protestantism, the religious establishments were made at the very dawn of the Reformation, when the minds of men were very unsettled, when every thing was full of tumult and confusion.-----And yet scarcely a religious establishment in Europe has made one successful effort for a farther reformation, if perhaps we are not to except some part of the Helvetick Church. They stand still in the very step where their fathers left off, as thoroughly satisfied, as if these venerable Reformers had acted by immediate inspiration from Heaven and by super-natural influence of the Holy Spirit of God. They continue to receive with a sanctimonious reverence the jargon of scholastick divinity, the fanciful notions of a vain philosophy, or the idle whimsies of dreaming Monks, handed down by tradition of the church through a long succession of dark ages, and rendered sacred by prescription and antiquity, and even by their obscurity and mysterious darkness.

THE consequence is as might be expected, that they have yet arrived at no greater purity
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of doctrine, no greater simplicity of worship, nor any more profitable discipline of the church.

No age has produced more eminent and illustrious men than the present and that of our fathers, both abroad and among ourselves, who have ascertained the rights of conscience and of private judgment, defined the rights of the church and christian liberty, the terms of our acceptance with God and that spiritual worship that is most worthy of him. So that we have every means of instruction, at what time soever the nation may be inclined to adopt a more perfect purity of doctrine and simplicity of worship.

BUT this, it would seem, is not the age of Reformation: for notwithstanding all our vast improvements in knowledge and in science, notwithstanding the indefatigable pains that have been taken in the study of the scriptures and critical researches into the opinions and practice of the earliest ages of antiquity, yet even among those men, who are remarkable for intellectual abilities, we still meet with much bigotry, strong prejudices, narrow contracted views, an unaccountable party spirit, and littleness of mind. We see nothing of that spirit of toleration, of that generosity of soul, that kindness and exalted charity, which ought to adorn the man and the christian.

THE characteristic of our age is a sordid love of money, spread through every rank and order of men: And among those of a higher rank, along with this base passion, a lust of domination,

tion, of tyranny and oppression. And where these vices reign and pollute the heart, how natural is it that infidelity or indifference to religion should prevail*, and that the rights of the christian church, however well understood in speculation, should yet be neglected and despised and trampled under foot. Our Saviour hath told us, "that offences will come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Mat. xviii. 7.

BUT however these things may be in our day; however men may continue at present attached to their several superstitions, to their peculiar modes of faith and ceremonies of worship; yet we know the Church of Christ shall not always *continue* in this state of confusion and degeneracy, but shall go on to a still more perfect and entire reformation.

V. As Christ hath laid the foundations of a church to endure throughout all ages; as by his presence he hath hitherto preserved his church, so that neither the powers of darkness nor the various devices of men have prevailed against it; and as other prophecies concerning the state of his church have been fulfilled, this is a pledge and security, that what he hath promised concerning the future glorious period of his church shall also be accomplished.

FOR as the promise of Christ extends to the end of the world, so we are told that his presence and government shall at length produce their full and perfect effects. We are taught to

* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

look for the universal prevalence of truth and righteousness, denoted by the brightness of the coming of Christ, and we are told that the *Man of Sin* and every remain of antichristian tyranny and corruption shall be destroyed by this glorious event, that as the darkness and morning cloud are gradually dispelled by the approach of the rising Sun; so shall the kingdom of darkness, of superstition and error vanish before some illustrious display of the divine truths of the Gospel.

HERE indeed a most pleasing and delightful prospect opens to our view. And in reaching forward in imagination to this future period of christianity, we might indulge our fancy in forming the most pleasing scenes of virtue, of purity, of happiness. We might give scope to the utmost range of thought in delineating a state of peace, and joy, and harmony, where the distinguishing character of our holy religion, the law of kindness and of love, shall also be the distinguishing character of the servants of Christ.

BUT whilst by the aid of prophecy we look forward into futurity, and would aim at unfolding those revolutions of the christian church, that are yet deeply hidden in the womb of time, when, as it is expressed, the Saints shall reign a thousand years;---should we attempt to delineate the nature of that state with regard to its form and government and those peculiarities, for which men contend *now* with so much animosity and uncharitableness, we might easily be lost in vain conjecture. Those boasted forms and establishments, which have been framed

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by man's device and supported by the powers of this world, and which have engaged the passions of angry men in so much wrath and ungenerous contention may, after all, be found to be nothing else but "*hay, wood and stubble*, that shall not abide the coming of Christ, but shall vanish and dissolve like the baseless fabrick of a Vision."

IT is enough for us to know, that there shall be a glorious state of the church, that the kingdom of Christ shall be a kingdom of truth and righteousness, that *all nations shall flow into it*, when spiritual tyranny, and domination shall be abolished, and that then the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, *as the waters cover the sea* * .-----When we would proceed farther, we are involved in obscurity and uncertainty; as the antient Prophets who, we are told, "searched diligently, what manner of time, the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow †." Prophecy is intended to be fully known, only by the accomplishment; though the notices it gives in the mean while tend to establish the mind in peace and hope in believing, and to keep alive the most intimate reliance on the providence of God, "to whom all his works are known from the beginning."

THUS have I taken a summary, but comprehensive view of the government of the christian church, and of those great and astonishing

* Isai. ii. 11. † 1 Pet. i. 10.

changes,

changes, that have already happened, and that shall happen to its final consummation.

FROM whence we may make these general observations; that the religion of Jesus did maintain its purity against the powers of the world, secure in the evidence of its divine institution, in its own intrinsic excellence, and in the protection of Heaven; that it could no longer support its purity, when the power and wisdom of the world interfered for its preservation; but that from thenceforth it sunk into the deepest degeneracy and corruption.

So that it would seem, the christian institution is of too pure, too excellent, and too sublime a nature to admit of any foreign mixture. Men forget their place and their station, when instead of subjects, they would become Governors and Lords of the christian church, and erect themselves into judges of the faith of their brethren, in direct opposition to the remonstrances of Christ and his Apostles. The kingdom of Christ is not to be governed by the wisdom of this world, but is to govern and rule in the hearts of his faithful subjects. Religion is a personal thing, and we are accountable for our perfection and improvement of it to God alone, as he only is Lord of Conscience.

I SHALL now go on to make some Observations from the whole of this Discourse, with a view particularly to the occasion of our present meeting.

And in the First place, I would observe, that to preserve any institution pure and entire, it is highly necessary to bring it often back to its *first principles*.

principles. If this be just and necessary any where, it must in a peculiar manner be so in regard to christianity ; an institution not of this world ; an institution derived from Heaven, and to support and maintain which its divine founder hath promised to be present at all times.

Now if the presence of Christ is to be hoped for in support of christianity, must not this be confined to those alone, who acknowledge him as their Lord, and who conform themselves to the laws he hath laid down in Scripture for the instruction and guidance of his followers, and to none other,-----If men once imagine that they have a power to alter any religious institution, either to add to or to diminish from it, or to explain by authority according to what they may think the exigence of times demands, and that their explications shall be received upon the foot of their authority, they must quickly lose sight of the first institution ; and however pure, however perfect it may be, they shall deviate widely from the truth, and be lost in ignorance and in error. Nor can they ever be reclaimed to the right path, till they return to the original standard of truth and purity. This appears a fundamental principle with the Apostles ; “ Hold fast the form of sound words, saith St. Paul to Timothy, which thou hast heard of me *.” And the Apostle Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints †.

* 2 Tim. i. 13. † Jude, ver. 3.

WE are warranted from the uniform experience of antient and modern times in asserting, that every corruption hath been introduced into christianity by men substituting something of their own in the place, or in aid of the holy Scripture; as if without this, Scripture had been insufficient and imperfect, insomuch that they seem *afraid* of trusting its purity and excellence; and that every reformation in the christian church hath been effected by calling men back to the acknowledgement of the Scriptures, as the ONLY STANDARD OF OUR FAITH.

PERHAPS it might be asserted too, that the providential care of Christ for his church has in nothing appeared more conspicuous than in the preservation of those sacred records.

FOR it is only by taking a full and just view of the noble and godlike scheme of christianity, *as proposed in the Gospel*, that we shall be able to judge of its nature and institution, and see how much it is every way worthy of Heaven. But if we confine ourselves to particular establishments, to Creeds and Confessions of Faith, chosen to be the distinguishing marks of particular sects and parties, by which the body of Christ hath been and continues to be unhappily broken, our views at best shall be narrow and contracted, or rather we shall wander in perpetual obscurity and darkness. Nor is it likely that our hearts shall ever be enlarged with those generous and comprehensive principles, which would lead us to be interested in whatever may concern

concern the vast family of God, or be warmed with that law of universal kindness, which is the honour and distinguishing character of our divine Religion.

BUT here is a singular appearance, and deserving our particular attention, that in all the various changes of government, and in all the various forms that Religion hath assumed, the new Testament, the Scripture of truth, the Gospel of peace, hath never been once established, but in its stead the particular deductions and fancies of particular men. But why do I say *established*?-----Since the days that the religion of Jesus has been modelled by the civil power even until now, the new Testament hath never been more than barely *tolerated* in any establishment in the christian world.

AND what is still more singular, it hath so happened, that those who have taken their religion only from the new Testament, who have acknowledged no other standard of christian faith but the holy Scripture, no other *head* of his church but Christ, have been pointed at by the hand of scorn, have been branded with the most odious names, have been judged guilty of worse than the worst of crimes, heresy and schism,* and therefore have been thought worthy of every punishment

* From the early ages of Christianity there have been bitter unceasing complaints of *heresy* and *schism*, and of the disturbances occasioned by them. For the most part however the persons accused of them have been very innocent; the fault hath lain on the side of their adversaries, who in violation of the Gospel have arrogantly attempted to

nishment that the servants of God have endured from the factious and bigotted!

BUT let us not think that those factions and persecutions that are and have been in the christian church, are to be charged to christianity--- The religion of Christ is an institution full of kindness, designed to establish peace on earth and good-will, tending to soften the passions of men, and to remove from their breasts every thing fierce, or cruel, or unfriendly. Hatred, contention, and uncharitableness are no part of the christian character: they are not the effects of that wisdom, which is from above, but are to be found only in those, who, according to the declaration of our Lord, *have not known the Father, nor him.*"

MEN may gloss over such conduct with what colourings they please; purity of faith, zeal for orthodoxy, peace of the church and of society, or any thing else which imagination can suggest; but were we to judge from the characters and
conduct

to impose their own favourite articles of faith and modes of worship upon others. Had men been suffered quietly to enjoy *the liberty wherewith Christ made them free*, the liberty of judging for themselves in religious matters, and of speaking and acting accordingly, the peace of the Church would have been preserved, the knowledge of sacred truth advanced and numberless errors and corruptions, which still prevail, would have been prevented or corrected. A perfect *Uniformity* in religion is not to be accomplished so long as the capacities, educations, opportunities and circumstances of mankind continue to be so different, but as far as it is attainable in consistence with duty, it is to be promoted by freedom of inquiry and unrestrained communication of sentiment.

conduct of men, the real cause would seem to be spiritual pride, vanity, haughtiness, tyranny and the lust of domination; and perhaps not least of all, ignorance, and a secret diffidence of the justness of their opinions, and a desire to establish by authority, what they feared to commit to the test of reason and argument.

AND it has happened, that men having introduced their own wisdom instead of the wisdom of God, have carried on their schemes, thus founded on usurpation, by means suited to it. The humble, the modest christian has been persecuted by the ignorant and furious bigot, upon I know not what idle dreams of *heresy*: Heresy generally meaning some speculative opinion in no sort detrimental to the practice of religion and holiness, but opposite to the reigning and fashionable superstition, and to the systems of high-priests supported by secular power and civil establishment.

THE various schemes of ecclesiastical polity, supported by human authority and founded upon supposed expediency of times and circumstances, have too long distracted the church of Christ. The experience of ages might have taught us, that those devices of human wisdom, instead of being a proper centre of union to the christian world, have filled it with confusion, have miserably rent it to pieces, and been the occasion of innumerable calamities.

WILL neither reason then nor experience convince us that the scripture *ought* to be the sole rule of faith, and that the Bible *ought* to be the religion of Protestants? YES;

YES; in our argument with the church of Rome, this by Protestants is deemed almost self-evident: but when it has served our purpose, we can easily lay it aside; and it must afterwards submit to our interest or our humour.

2. As we have seen that this general corruption of christianity shall not always prevail, but shall at length give place to the empire of truth and righteousness; Let us, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, endeavour to do our part to forward this glorious state of the church of Christ. Good men are said to be fellow-workers with God and with Christ, in promoting his Kingdom of righteousness upon earth: this is a most distinguished honour of the servants of God, and can only be attained by cultivating that temper and character becoming our holy religion.

WHAT I would mention as most essential here is the union of christians among themselves in mutual affection and esteem. This is the best support men can give to the religion of Christ; for his church can never be more strengthened, can never be placed on a surer foundation, can never be better promoted in the world, than by the prevalence of those generous principles of kindness, of affection, of humanity, of condescension to others, and a sacred and inviolable regard to the rights of conscience and of private judgment.

BUT in this Assembly, I need not stay to assert the principles of private judgment and christian liberty; for upon these sacred principles we

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stand as Protestant Dissenters, and I need not lay this foundation again. Neither need I mention that it was upon the principles of private judgment and personal persuasion that christianity first prevailed in the world; that it was from an awful sense of the necessity of obeying God rather than man, that it triumphed over every opposition; that it was upon these principles that it continued to support itself through every age, however discountenanced and borne down, and that it was particularly upon these principles, that the reformation from popery was happily effected.

MUST it not then be in the uncontrouled exercise of these principles, that christianity in its native purity and excellence shall finally prevail?

-----Must it not be by the *best* exercise of the powers of the human mind, in searching into the great truths of God contained in holy Scripture, in which we justly think we have eternal life?-----Must it not be in this industrious search after truth, in the love of it, prevailing generally among men, that we can hope for the accomplishment of those illustrious prophecies concerning the future glorious period of the kingdom of Christ on earth, when the Lord Jesus shall be the glory in the midst of it?

IN promoting this great purpose of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, we see from the foregoing discourse that the countenance or discountenance of the world and the powers of it, ought in no sort to weigh with us:--- That the assistance of the world, such as it ever hath yet been, is to be

be suspected, nay is rather to be avoided and rejected; as it hath been found no less unfriendly to christianity; than the friendship of the world in morals hath been enmity to God.

3. HENCE we may see, that to promote the interest of Christ's kingdom, moderation and humility in all the subjects of it, but especially in the ministers of the Gospel, are most essential and necessary qualities; ---- *That they do not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but do think soberly, and in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves.* Rom. xii.

3. 2 Tim. ii. 25.

LET then the sons of tyranny and of pride triumph in a supposed perfection of their sacred character, that they are more holy than others: ---- Let them with a secret complacence, boast of their antiquity, their uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, and all their high claims, their mighty pretensions to superiority.

BUT let us, my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, establish our claim to the character of Ministers of the Gospel, by a careful attention to our duty, and a faithful discharge of the pastoral office; that we may deserve to be honoured and esteemed highly in love, for our "works-sake. Let us, by rightly dividing the word of " truth, not as having dominion over the faith " of the servants of another master, but as helpers of their joy, study to shew ourselves approved of God, that so we may both save " ourselves, and those that hear us."

As a branch of this humility and moderation,

let me recommend to you an inoffensive and peaceable conduct, as members of the body of Christ. I know nothing that tends more to the destruction of this best and happiest temper of mind, than angry altercations about religion.

THERE is surely no subject of inquiry that ought to be engaged in with greater composure of mind and good humour, than our inquiries about the divine truths of the Gospel; and yet I know not how it is, no disputes are apt to be attended with greater animosity and bitterer contention, and with a more confirmed dislike and contempt of one another, than religious disputations: in which it is well if instead of improving, the mind come off but moderately hurt.

IT is therefore a matter of duty as well as wisdom to guard against such disputations, to avoid foolish and unprofitable questions, that gender strife, hatred, variance, and that do more hurt by breaking the harmony and peace of the mind, than the principles, which men contend about, are ever likely to do good; which almost ever have been matters of doubtful disputation, words to no profit; curious perhaps and difficult, in which however the essence of christianity is in no wise concerned.

MEN are generally agreed in Essentials: good men are always so. What men commonly dispute about, is not religion, but something under the name of religion, some partial view of it, some *form of godliness without the power of it*, which a spirit of party, ill-guided zeal, pride, or other infirmities incident to our humanity,
make

make us pursue with too much keenness and unprofitable heat.

THERE have been many, whose characters in every other view were worthy and respectable, that have been exceedingly addicted to this idle vanity, and carried away by this unhappy and disagreeable humour, by which the peace of society has been much broken, and the interest of religion has greatly suffered. Ought such conduct to excite our contempt and indignation? Or should it be looked upon rather with an eye of affectionate concern and pity? Be this as it may; good men ought carefully to avoid every thing that may bear the character of *perverse disputings, and opposition of Science falsely so called, and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, railings, and bitter surmises.*"

I Tim. vi. 4, 20.

AND the temper opposite to this is no less to be avoided, which is a sort of indifference, supineness, or stupid insensibility about the interests of religion. For peace, though a most desirable blessing, may yet be bought too dear, and we are not left free to purchase it upon any terms, upon such terms, as may be inconsistent with duty, with the dictates of conscience, and of honour.---When virtue and integrity, when a regard for truth and the glory of God, when constancy and resolution in our christian profession become the question in dispute and nothing less than our relinquishing these will be accepted as an accommodation, in such cases, peace becomes impossible: for we are ever to
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prefer the testimony of a good conscience to every other consideration, and to "stand fast" "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," and maintain our allegiance to the Lord Jesus, sacred and inviolable.

LET the servants of God and of Christ however few or however discountenanced by the world and the powers of it, be zealous in maintaining and propagating the great truths of the Gospel-----This is a cause they should support with invincible fortitude and resolution. And while they support it on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, while they contend in the generous struggle for the rights of the christian church, the rights of conscience and christian liberty, they are sure that however for a time this cause may be borne down, yet in the end it shall prevail, and that in this contest they that are with us, are more than they that are against us.---The Lord hath promised his presence to those that *strive lawfully*, and hath insured a glorious reward to those *that turn many to righteousness*.

BUT let it be remembered that it is only by cultivating a generosity and largeness of Soul, that we shall be able to rise superior to that confined spirit of party, which is to be found in almost every denomination of christians and which is the bane of religion. It is only by keeping the mind free from prejudice, by cultivating candour, ingenuity and openness of mind, that we shall be able to discern the noble and sublime truths of christianity, and have
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any peculiar interest in the protection of Heaven.

LET us not think lightly of these things ; but let us consider, that if the providence of God be conspicuous in super-intending the affairs of the material world, so that the beauty, order, and variety fill the imagination with a sort of pleasing astonishment and wonder.—How much more should we expect, that the interposition of providence should be exerted relative to the most exalted part of man, that noblest part of our nature, by which we are superior to, and distinguished from the other inhabitants of this world, and by which alone we are said to be created in the image of our maker. And the more especially when we consider ;

THAT this care of the divine Being is not confined to one family, or to one nation-----to one age, or period of the world,-----but extends to every age, and to every nation-----to all that vast family of God, of which Christ is the head ; and throughout the endless duration of an eternal age.

HERE, now, is an object worthy of the divine interposition-----here is an object worthy of the greatness and majesty of God. For, if any thing, in our world, be worthy of the interposition of Heaven, it must be to raise the human race, by means of religion, to the greatest dignity and happiness it can enjoy, both here and hereafter.-----That divine temper which religion inspires, and which constitutes our present dignity and happiness, is the means, also,
of

of advancing to a capacity of enjoying the blessedness of the heavenly state, by being carried forward and perfected in the society of the blessed Angels above; in a peculiar communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus; and in some certain intimate enjoyment of God himself. A state of happiness and perfection, so great, that the scripture labours, as it were, to raise our thoughts to some grand conceptions of it, when it speaketh of our being filled with all the fulness of God.

SEEING then, that such glorious and exalted scenes of divine providence are to be revealed, in which we are so immediately and deeply interested,---Let the servants of Christ, with hearts filled with gratitude to God and their Redeemer, cultivate that elevation of mind, that godlike disposition of soul, which would lead them to unite the christian world in that charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and which is the principal foundation of the peace and happiness of the universal family of Christ, *that when his glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy: And that God in all things may be glorified in Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion, for ever and ever: Amen.* 1 Pct. iii. 11, 13.



F I N I S.

